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Considering a U.S. Military Force on the Golan: Confronting the Hyperbole, Paranoia, Hysteria and Agendas

LTC Stephen H. Gotowicki, U.S. Army
8 May 1996

First, if there is a peace agreement between Syria and Israel, and if the two parties request that we send troops to monitor the Golan Heights, then after consultation with Congress we would be willing to do that, or we'd be willing to consider doing it. I'm quite sure we would find a way to do that, but the decision is very much contingent on two things. One, there has to be a peace agreement; and two, both parties have to request it.

Mr. Kenneth H. Bacon, Assistant to the Secretary of
Defense (Public Affairs), Department of Defense News
Briefing, January 16, 1996

President Clinton, Secretary of State Christopher and Secretary of Defense Perry have all, at one time or another in the last several years, offered a U.S. military force to assist in the implementation of a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. The current Administration has placed a very high foreign policy priority on achieving an Israeli-Syrian accord. None of the parties have yet requested U.S. military forces as part of an agreement, but expectations are high that the Israelis will require such a force in the event it withdraws from the Golan Heights. Despite the long and close relationship between the United States and Israel, Syria, is likely to acquiesce to a U.S. force on the Golan as well. The United States has long stated that an Arab-Israeli peace is a national interest and foreign policy objective. An Arab-Israeli peace would promote regional stability and ensure the survival and security of the state of Israel. Regional stability would facilitate the pursuit of U.S. regional interests such as continued access to oil resources, improving relations with Arab states, expanding markets, and stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and extremism. The Clinton Administration is committed to the success of the peace process and if U.S. military forces are required -- so be it. The question is really not whether U.S. military forces will deploy to the Golan -- if an accord is signed they most likely will. The more important questions for the military planner are force subordination, size, mission, mission duration and who will pay? Administration officials have yet to define their vision of either the mission or the size of the prospective U.S. military force. The standard Administration refrain is that before there is an accord between the two parties, it is too early to detail specifics. To some extent this is true. The accord should detail the security and geographical modalities of the peace and these will be instrumental in determining the specific force requirements in

terms of size and equipment, but not the force mission. A peacekeeping force has fairly standard mission requirements i.e. compliance monitoring.

Pundits, commentators and armchair strategists in both Israel and the United States have not been as hesitant as the U.S. Administration in proposing the composition and mission of a possible U.S. military force. Many of these opinions have sprung from people or groups opposed to an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights or concessions to Syria. Their presentations usually adopt a "worst-case" approach and contend that the outcomes would have dire existential consequences for Israel and present dangers for American soldiers: an Israeli withdrawal will lead to a surprise Syrian attack; a U.S. force interpositioned between Israel and Syria would restrict Israeli military options; a U.S. force could not provide Israel the security guarantees it requires; U.S. soldiers would be subject to terrorist attack. Speculation on required force size has ranged from as few as a handful to as many as two combat-ready divisions. Proposed mission requirements have included compliance monitoring, early warning, deterrence, serving as a tripwire and the active defense of Israel.¹

A U.S. military deployment to the Golan Heights will most likely occur under the auspices of a multinational force for the reasons given below and because one or both parties is likely to reject a unilateral U.S. force. In May of 1994, President Clinton signed Presidential Decision Directive -25 (PDD-25) which was the first comprehensive U.S. policy on multilateral peacekeeping suited for the post-Cold war era.² PDD-25 embraced multilateral peacekeeping operations (specifically UN operations) as potentially important and useful tools in American foreign policy. The directive proposes that collective engagement is intelligent strategy. Collective engagement shares the cost burdens, shares the commitment of resources, provides community legitimacy and shares the blame if problems arise. PDD-25 established a series of factors to consider when contemplating participation in a given peace operation:³

- Participation advances U.S. interests and both the unique and general risks to American personnel have been weighed and are considered acceptable.
- Personnel, funds and other resources are available;
- U.S. participation is necessary for operation's success;
- The role of U.S. forces is tied to clear objectives and an endpoint for U.S. participation can be identified;
- Domestic and Congressional support exists or can be marshalled;
- Command and control arrangements are acceptable.

In the case of a possible U.S. military deployment to the Golan, we could assess that participation will advance expressed U.S. interests; personnel, funds and other resources could be available (within limits); and that U.S. participation is necessary for the operation's success. The issues of unique and general risks; clear objectives and endpoint; and domestic and Congressional support are as yet uncertain.

This paper will attempt to address all but the latter⁴ of these uncertain factors and will survey the prospects for providing a U.S. military peacekeeping force on the Golan. It will endeavor to look beyond the associated hyperbole, hysteria and agendas and will focus on the standard requirements for peacekeeping, the possibilities of a Syrian surprise attack, the military balance between Israel and Syria, early warning, deterrence and the terrorist threat to U.S. peacekeepers. The goal is to determine what U.S. military

peacekeeping package for the Golan Heights would be in the best interests of the United States and would most effectively guarantee the peace between Israel and Syria.

THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

The Golan Heights is a mountainous plateau rising steeply from the Jordan river valley along Israel's northeast border. The Golan has a north-south length of 40 miles, and an east-west width varying between 7.5 miles and 16 miles. It covers an area of approximately 780 square miles. The heights have an average height of approximately 3,200 feet and are dominated by Mount Hermon in the north with an elevation of 7,296 feet. At its most rugged, the surface geology is a hard basalt cover strewn with massive boulders, explosion craters, ropy lava formations, and most notably occasional conical rises shaped like giant ant hills and known as tels.⁵ In other areas, the Golan provides broad expanses of rich arable land.

During the 1967 Six Day War, Israel captured the Golan Heights, placed it under military administration and began to establish Jewish settlements. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Syria briefly recaptured a portion of the Golan Heights, but Israel quickly regained the lost terrain and captured additional Syrian territory. In 1974, the Israel-Syria Disengagement of Forces Agreement, brokered by the United States, resulted in Syria's regaining some of the land lost in 1967, but the majority remained in Israeli possession. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was

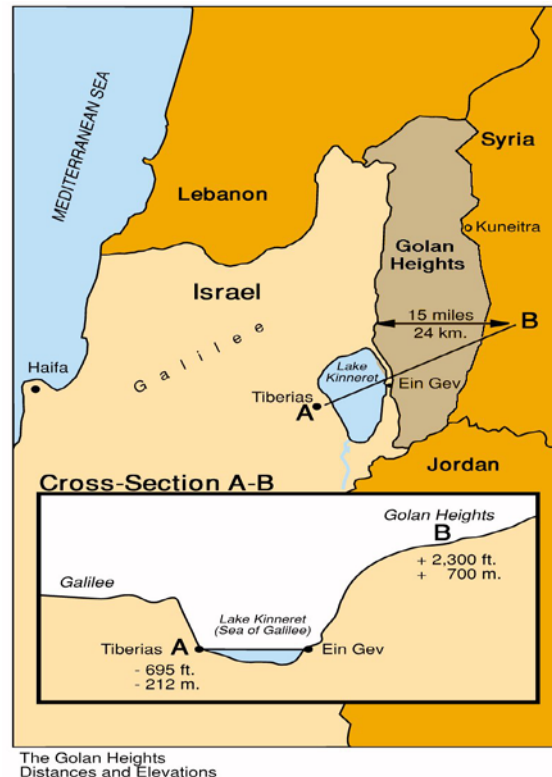


Figure 1 - Golan Heights Map and Cross Section. *Source: Government of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs via Internet (<http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>) (modified slightly by author)*

established to monitor compliance for this disengagement agreement. In December 1981, the Israeli Government passed legislation to bring the Golan Heights under civil law, jurisdiction and administration. There have been no major military conflicts on the Golan since 1973.

Prior to the 1967 war, there were reportedly 130,000 or more Syrians living on the Golan Heights. Today only about 16,500 Syrians (15,000 Druze and 1,500 Alawites) remain on the Heights in four or five villages. The Jewish population numbers about 14,500 in 32 communities.⁶

Some commentators have compared the mission requirements for the Golan with the mission of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai, but there are some major differences. The Sinai offers broad expanses of terrain, with large buffer zones and a very sparse population where direct contact between the two parties is minimized. The Golan, in contrast, is compact, populated and offers very little expanse to establish large buffer zones. Distances on the Sinai are reported in hundreds of miles -- on the Golan they are reported in tens of miles and the two military forces can be expected to remain in fairly close proximity to each other.

The Golan is important to Israel for a variety of reasons. The foremost is security. The Israelis are concerned that Syria might mount another surprise attack against northern Israel through the Golan. Many Israelis strongly insist that the Golan provides an indispensable strategic buffer zone, a favorable line of defense and an advantageous position for launching an offense against Syria.⁷ As a consequence, the



Figure 2 - Looking north from the Golan Heights toward Mount Hermon

Israelis maintain an armored division and numerous intelligence facilities on the Heights to provide it defense and early warning. The principal intelligence facility is a large and sophisticated site on the northern slope of Mount Hermon with a commanding view of southern Syria

and Damascus. From this facility, the Israelis gather extensive visual and electronic intelligence on Syria which provides them detailed tactical and strategic intelligence as well as early warning data.

Some would argue that there is a certain illogic in Israeli references to the Golan as a strategic buffer since it has been occupied and settled. A buffer zone that is settled is no longer truly a buffer zone. Ze'ev Maoz, Director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, says "The claim that the Golan provides strategic depth that protects the Galilee has led to an absurdity: We are simply transferring the Galilee to the Golan, and the problem of defending the Galilee today will turn into a problem of how to defend the Jewish population of the Golan in a few years hence."⁸ He continues by asking whether it would be possible to evacuate the 14,500 Israeli settlers on the Golan on a few hours notice when hostilities are anticipated. These settlers would compete for use of the same limited and narrow roads that would be needed for the deployment of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and would likely inhibit Israel's strategic response to Syrian aggression.

The Israeli settlements on the Golan are also a factor in the Golan's importance to Israel and constitute a significant political problem for the Israeli government. In any accord, Syria will require their removal. A significant percentage of the settlers are not willing to leave their homes peaceably which again raises the specter of Yamit for the Israeli government.⁹



Figure 3 - Looking west from the Golan Heights to Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee)

Arguably, water is second only to security in importance to Israel. Approximately 30 percent of Israel's national water supply comes from the Golan. Two of the three springs that give birth to the Jordan river flow from the Golan. Prior to the 1967 war, the Syrians attempted to divert these sources to deny Israel water and the Israelis attempted to divert the Jordan river from Syrian use in the demilitarized zone established by the 1949 armistice agreements. The continued exclusive Israeli control over Lake Kinneret (also routinely called the Sea of Galilee and Lake Tiberias) will also be an important factor for Israel in determining the final Israeli withdrawal lines.

For the Syrians the Golan is important because it allows the IDF to occupy positions only about 35 miles from Damascus. Syria is concerned with the Israel capability to use the Golan Heights to launch an attack against it. Syrian citizens continue to live on the Golan under Israeli occupation. This is a source of embarrassment for the Syrian government and President al-Assad feels duty-bound to bring them back under Syrian sovereignty. An Israeli occupied Golan is also a continuing reminder of Syria's resounding military defeats of 1967 and 1973.

As the opening quote of this paper specifies, both Israel and Syria will have to agree to the deployment of U.S. forces on the Golan Heights. In meetings with senior U.S. military officials in 1993 and early 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin told them that he had never asked for nor accepted the concept of U.S. forces on the Golan to implement a peace accord. Mr. Rabin believed that asking for a U.S. military presence would violate the Israeli credo of military self-reliance. On 3 October 1994, during his annual address to the Knesset, Mr. Rabin changed his position and stated that he would accept U.S. soldiers on the Golan to provide only compliance monitoring and early warning.

. . . today there are 980 U.S. soldiers in the Sinai supervising the military annex of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty. We will not demand anything else of the Americans when we secure a peace treaty with Syria on the Golan -- the same thing, the very same thing . . . We will have a multinational force deployed on the Golan like that which exists in the Sinai today, and it will

include American troops, also similar to those we now have in the Sinai, as well as early warning stations, periodic checks, etc.^{[10](#)}

It is likely this change of position was an attempt by Mr. Rabin to gain popular support for a peace accord with Syria. Under increasing political pressure, Mr. Rabin committed to holding a national referendum to approve peace with Syria. Israeli polls at the time showed an overwhelming rejection (60-80 percent) of returning the Golan Heights, in whole or part, to Syria. Since Mr. Rabin's assassination, polls have shown an increase in those supporting a withdrawal from the Golan Heights for peace with Syria to between 42 and 47 percent. In his references to American troops "similar to those we have in the Sinai," Rabin appeared to be asking for a U.S. combat unit as opposed to U.S. military observers. There is an unstated implication that these U.S. soldiers would assist in providing Israel security or assist in its defense that could be intended to mollify public fears. Dore Gold states, ". . . the Israeli popular perception of an American presence on the Golan is that it would somehow have defensive combat value."^{[11](#)}

In 1993 and early 1994, Syria's position was that they did not want an exclusive U.S. military force on the Golan Heights. Their stated preference is for an international force and a United Nations force is probably their preference. In late 1994, the Syrians indicated that they would accept a U.S. military presence on the Golan that was a part of a larger international force. The Syrians have never addressed the size of such a force. There are indications that the Syrians actually see the presence of U.S. military on the Golan as a military plus for Syria because it would provide the Syrians with some measure of protection against an Israeli attack as well as provide a venue for improving relations with the U.S.

PEACEKEEPING REQUIREMENTS

What should a U.S. military peacekeeping force on the Golan look like? In the parlance of the United Nations Charter, a peacekeeping mission on the Golan Heights would normally constitute a "Chapter VI" mission.^{[12](#)} A Chapter VI mission calls for the pacific settlement of disputes through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, etc. vice imposition of peace through military action (Chapter VII). In a Chapter VI peacekeeping operation, both belligerents have agreed to a military disengagement (with the accompanying withdrawal, demilitarization and military limitations) and the supervision of an impartial UN peacekeeping force. In these peacekeeping operations, the primary mission of the peacekeepers is ". . . the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between states (or forces) through the medium of a peaceful third party intervention organized and directed internationally using multinational forces of soldiers, police and civilians to restore and maintain order."^{[13](#)} This is accomplished through impartial third-party compliance monitoring of withdrawal, demilitarization, and force limitation agreements. In a situation such as an Israeli-Syrian accord, where peace will be established through mutual agreement, a peacekeeping force to monitor compliance would normally be comprised of unarmed military observers and would not require regular combat units.

Such has been the case on the Golan Heights since 1974 where the peacekeeping mission established by the Israeli-Syrian Disengagement of Forces Agreement has been successfully conducted by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). UNDOF has a strength of about 1,030 representing four countries (Austria, Canada, Poland and Japan).¹⁴ Austria and Poland each provide an infantry battalion, Canada provides a logistics battalion and Japan provides transportation assets. Are infantry soldiers necessary? Probably not, but one must remember that UNDOF was deployed onto the Golan in 1974 immediately following major hostilities between Israel and Syria. There was no peace treaty. Tranquility was by no means assured. Compared to recent U.S. experiences in peacekeeping, the Golan Heights should offer a relatively straight-forward, simple peacekeeping proposition focusing primarily on compliance monitoring. Unlike Somalia or Rwanda there is no ethnic separation required, no expected conflict with hostile belligerent forces, no requirement for peace enforcement, no nation building and no humanitarian support. Nominally, a U.S. military contingent of between 50-200 military observers as part of a larger multilateral force could effectively accomplish the required peacekeeping responsibilities. However, a new peacekeeping force on the Golan Heights will have to address Israeli confidence in its security, be acceptable to Syria and have costs consistent with U.S. resources, interests and expected benefits. This may not be so easy. Israel is expected to insist that early warning and, implicitly, deterrence be added as required missions for a new peacekeeping force. Israel's emphasis on the deployment of a U.S. combat unit is probably derived from three factors: its concern for the possibility of a major Syrian surprise attack once Israel withdraws from the Golan; the expectation that U.S. soldiers will be asked to man the early warning sites that Israel will be required to vacate; and the symbolic requirement to appease the concerns of its citizens concerning peace with Syria. Providing early warning is doable and can be construed as a reasonable function of compliance monitoring and has been done by the U.S. in other circumstances. The question is will the commitment of the minimum U.S. resources necessary to adequately accomplish these missions be acceptable to realize Israel's symbolic requirements? The U.S. no longer has the resources to enter into long-term, open-ended, expensive commitments of its resources without compelling reasons to do so and without possible negative impact on U.S. global military readiness. Since 1988, the U.S. Army has shrunk from 16 active divisions to ten. Between 1990 and 1996, U.S. Defense budgets declined approximately 30 percent (from \$349 billion to \$245 billion (constant 1996 dollars)).¹⁵ The requirements for global engagement have not shrunk. In committing to a force size for a U.S. Golan peacekeeping contingent, the U.S. must decide whether to plan for the "worst case" with the concomitant costs or to seek the economy of planning for the "most likely." It must balance risks, costs, likelihood and benefit. Key to this decision is an assessment of Syria's commitment to peace and its capability for negative action. The following will argue that Syria has few realistic strategic choices beyond peace and does not have the motivation or capability to attack Israel.

AL-ASSAD'S STRATEGIC CHOICE

Syria seeks a just and comprehensive peace with Israel as a strategic choice that secures Arab rights, ends the Israeli occupation, and enables

all peoples in the region to live in peace, security and dignity. In honor we fought; in honor we negotiate; and in honor we shall make peace.

Syrian President Hafez Al-al-Assad,
Press Conference with President Clinton,
16 January 1994.

After 48 years of conflict with Israel, the Syrian leadership has apparently made the "strategic choice" to seek peace. The complete return of the Golan is the *sine qua non*¹⁶ for peace between Syria and Israel. The changes in the Middle East over the last decade would seem to indicate that a change in Syrian attitudes toward peace with Israel is a strategic requirement. From the strategic, political and economic points of view, Syria has found itself in a highly unfavorable situation that is likely only to deteriorate further.¹⁷

For Syria, the regional strategic situation changed drastically with the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Syria was very dependent on the generous military aid it received from the former Soviet Union. Russia is no longer a willing and generous military sponsor and armorer to Syria. With a decrepit economy, Syria has been unable to find other sources of military aid to replace Soviet largesse. With the collapse of Soviet influence in the Middle East, Syria also lost a large measure of perceived deterrence against an Israeli attack believing that its close relations with the Soviet Union would have deterred Israeli aggression.¹⁸

Syria's economy is somewhat stagnant. Despite the significant reforms and ambitious development projects instituted in the early 1990s, the legacy of long-term socialist-style state intervention in the economy still hampers Syrian economic growth. Oil production, while not large when compared to the Arab Gulf states, accounts for much of Syria's export income; however, Syrian production levels are expected to shrink in coming years. Financial aid from the Gulf states is also expected to taper off. Through heavy military spending in years past, Syria has accumulated large external debts which it has not adequately addressed and which diminish its credit worthiness. Syria needs significant external investment; however, Western and Arab investors have not rushed to fill Syria's needs.¹⁹

Syria's support for Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, isolated it from the majority of its Arab neighbors during the 1980s. This isolation denied Syria significant levels of Arab investment and regional political support. Egypt's peace accord with Israel isolated Syria further, making it the only remaining significant confrontation state against Israel. Only since Syria's participation in the allied coalition against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has Syria's relations with the moderate Arab countries and the West improved. Syrian support and shelter of groups involved in regional and international terrorism continue to strain its relations with Western nations.

Focusing on this new regional milieu, many believe that al-Assad has made a judgement that improved relations with the United States is a strategic requirement and this has probably become one of his top priorities. Its not hard to imagine that Syria would prefer to make peace and normalize relations with the U.S. more than with Israel -- unfortunately peace with Israel is the price al-Assad has to pay to improve relations with the United States and to recover the Golan Heights.

Many Israelis question President al-Assad's rationality. Logically it would hold that if one accepts that Hafez al-Assad is committed to achieving peace with Israel (as are Prime Minister Peres, President Clinton, Secretary of State Christopher and as was the late Yitzhak Rabin), one must by default also accept his rationality. Frequently senior Israeli leaders refer to al-Assad as the most cunning, shrewd, and intelligent leader in the Middle East. The comments of Major General Uri Sagi, until recently the Director of Military Intelligence, Israel Defense Forces, concerning Hafez al-Assad are enlightening:

*"I believe that al-Asad understood that Israel is stronger than Syria militarily, and he finds it difficult to reach strategic parity . . . Al-Asad is a very experienced person who knows the Middle East inside and out. . . He is a man of reason, he is cautious and suspicious, . . . To a very large degree it is possible to say that he is reliable as long as his interests are served. . . Suffice it to say that if and when he signs an agreement, he will keep his word . . . I can detect enough stability among today's ruling group - - I am referring to four or five people -- to continue in al-Asad's direction, for a short period of time at least."*²⁰

In military terms, Israel doesn't need peace with Syria -- Israel maintains a pronounced military superiority over Syria and the border has been (remarkably) quiet since 1974. In some Israeli circles, the *status quo* is acceptable. Despite frequent mispronouncements in the western media, Syria is not a powerful state in the Middle East. It does not have significant oil resources, it has no ideological draw for the Arab masses, it does not have a superpower sponsor, it has a weak economy, and while it does have a large military it cannot project or sustain its military power far beyond its borders. Its long-range weapons, its SCUD-C ballistic missiles, are essentially suited only for harassment, interdiction and getting it into much deeper trouble. For Israel, however, Syria is a key to a broader regional peace. Peace with Syria is necessary to improve the prospects for a broader peace with the countries of the Arabian Peninsula -- read Saudi Arabia²¹ and to a lesser extent the Maghreb states. As one of the primary confrontation states, Syria carried the burdens of the Arabs *writ large* in the struggle against Israel. As that struggle comes to an end, Saudi Arabia will not abandon Syria and is unlikely to openly embrace peace with Israel until a satisfactory peace accord (from Syria's perspective) is instituted between Israel and Syria.²²

POSSIBILITIES OF A SYRIAN SURPRISE ATTACK

The Israeli concern for a major Syrian attack against Israel after its withdrawal from the Golan is a somewhat fearful concern resulting from three wars and almost 50 years of suspicion, fear and mistrust. Popular Israeli fear of a Syrian attack is probably an important factor in Israel's desire for a symbolic U.S. combat force. Syria's objective and demonstrated capabilities render this concern somewhat implausible. A number of facts and considerations support this conclusion:

- President Hafez al-Assad has long accepted Israeli military superiority.²³ In point of fact, the Syrians are somewhat afraid that Israel will attack Syria.
- While Israel's regional qualitative military edge is expected to continue to grow in the coming years, Syria's military capabilities are actually in decline.²⁴ The collapse of the former Soviet Union left the Syrians without a major military benefactor and forced

President al-Assad to conclude that his drive to reach military parity with Israel is unachievable. The flow of modern military equipment on "bargain basement" credit terms Syria previously enjoyed²⁵ stopped in the late 1980s. The Russians now demand cash payment on delivery for weapons systems -- cash Syria doesn't have. Al-Assad recognizes that Syria does not have the economic capacity to effectively compete with Israel in the military sphere.

- Syria's new situation with its former Soviet armorer has also resulted in major shortages of critical repair parts which has precipitated a further decline in Syrian military readiness and capability. No short-term improvement in this situation is foreseen.

- An attack upon Israel on the Golan would carry significant strategic risks for Syria. It would likely precipitate an Israeli military response either through the Bekaa in Lebanon -- flanking Syria's attacking force and threatening Damascus, or through Jordan. In either case, Syria would be hard pressed to effectively respond. It would also probably trigger a massive punitive Israeli air campaign against high-value Syrian targets and cities. Syria would not be able to achieve air superiority to prevent such an Israeli air campaign.

- The Syrians take seriously, as do all of the Arab states, the threat posed by the reputed Israeli nuclear arsenal.

- The Syrians are probably under no illusions that they could win a war against Israel without significant support from other surrounding Arab states. Unlike 1973, Syria is now isolated in its opposition to Israel and would have to attack Israel without the benefit of its previous allies. The Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian peace accords with Israel preclude such support and support from the Gulf states could not be expected.

- Syrian military officers were reportedly very impressed by the U.S. technology and weapons demonstrated in Desert Storm. They know that Israel has acquired and produces many of these weapons which they cannot match.²⁶

- Desert Storm established a precedent that the U.S. would employ combat forces in the region in defense of its interests. President al-Assad can not believe that an attack on Israel would not precipitate a U.S. military response given the long and close relations between the United States and Israel. A U.S. military response could conceivably consist only of a rapidly mounted air campaign against Syria, but even such a limited response would be extremely damaging to Syria and virtually indefensible by Syria.

- A Syrian attack on Israel would run counter to Syria's goals of improving its relations with the United States and seeking Western economic aid.

- With the return of the Golan to Syrian sovereignty, and at least a partial resolution of the Palestinian plight, Syria's primary motivations for war against Israel will have been removed.

A countering argument to most of the preceding could be that many of these same concerns did not prevent Syria from attacking Israel in 1973. While true, in 1973, Syria still had a Superpower ally.

It is hard to imagine many compelling reasons why Syria would attack Israel if it withdrew from the Golan Heights. Unrequited hatred of Israelis or Zionists? Continued unsolicited support for Palestinian claims? Arab nationalism? It is interesting to consider whether such an attack is more likely after an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan or in a case where al-Assad is rebuffed by Israel's refusal to return the Golan to Syria.

ISRAELI-SYRIAN MILITARY BALANCE

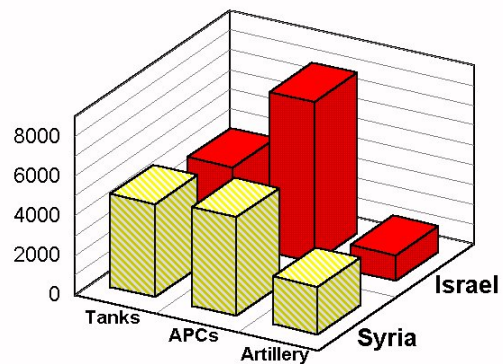


Figure 4 - Israeli-Syrian Equipment Balances. Source: *The Middle East Military Balance, 1993-1994*

The current military balance would also seem to argue against a Syrian attack on Israel. To evaluate a military balance two factors: numbers and potency need consideration. As figures 4 through 6 show, the aggregate differences between the Israeli and Syrian militaries are not significantly large. Figure 4 shows that in terms of numbers, Syria possesses more tanks (18%) and artillery pieces (46%) while Israel possesses 38 percent more armored personnel carriers than Syria. In terms of potency, 46 percent of Israel's tanks can be rated high quality (Merkava or M60A3) and the remainder are medium quality (Centurion, M60A1, M48A5). Only 31 percent of Syria's tanks can be rated high quality (T-72). Over 48 percent of Syria's tanks are aging, near-obsolete, low quality T-54/T-55s. Most of Israel's artillery pieces are self-propelled systems. Eighty four percent of Syria's artillery pieces are older, less capable towed systems. A comparison of long-range targeting and fire control capabilities would further demonstrate Israeli superiority in this category.

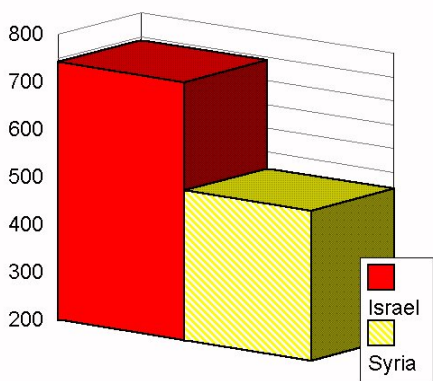


Figure 5 - Israeli-Syrian Combat Capable Aircraft Source: *The Middle East Military Balance 1993-1994*

Figure 5 shows that Israel has a significantly larger fleet of combat capable aircraft than Syria. As was demonstrated in 1982, the Israeli Air Force is one of the region's most

potent combat forces. In combat aircraft, Israel commands unquestioned numerical, technological and capabilities advantages over Syria.

Figure 6 compares personnel strengths and shows a striking difference in strategic philosophies. Syria maintains a large standing army of 306,000²⁷ at all times and depends on a smaller reserve structure of 100,000²⁸ during periods of conflict. Israel, in contrast, maintains a small standing army of 136,000 and is dependent on its 363,000 reserve soldiers. This difference in active versus reserve strengths is the reason why Israel places such high importance on early warning. Israel nominally requires 24-96 hours to fully mobilize, equip and deploy its reserves to the battle zone. It should be noted that once

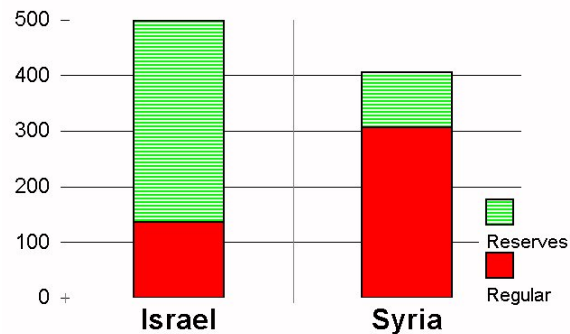


Figure 6 - Israeli-Syrian Military Strengths Source: *The Middle East Military Balance, 1993-1994*

fully mobilized, the Israeli army is larger than Syria's.

The regional proliferation of Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSMs) has complicated Israel's mobilization strategy. Syria possesses sufficient SSMs (SS-21s, SCUD-Cs) with the necessary range, firepower and adequate accuracy to disrupt Israel's mobilization by attacking bases, assembly points, air fields and transportation and logistics facilities. However, this threat is unrelated to an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in that Syria has the capability in any case. This factor will serve to raise Israel's perception of threat and may lower its response threshold.

One last element of comparison is the military expenditures each country allocates.

Figure 7 compares Israeli and Syrian military expenditures from 1975-1993.²⁹ Despite recent Israeli concerns for Syrian procurement with its Gulf war

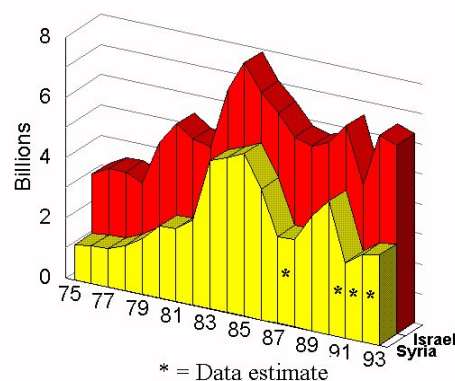


Figure 7 - Israeli-Syrian Military Expenditures 1975-1993. Source: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

profits³⁰ this figure shows that Israel's military expenditures are consistently higher than Syria's -- significant when comparing country sizes, armed forces sizes and populations. Potency is factored into military capability evaluations because it is a force multiplier. Israel's potency is often characterized by what is referred to as its Qualitative Military Edge (QME). Israel is the unquestioned military hegemon in the region because of the quality of its military. Unlike the Arab states, Israel has embraced the Revolution in Military Affairs.³¹ In American military thought, QME is the aggregate of all those factors that enhance a military's capabilities over those of its adversaries. These include, among other things, the quality and technology of its weapons as well as the quality of leadership, personnel, intelligence, training, doctrine, battlefield automation, battle management, research and development, logistics infrastructure, morale, and alliances. The potency of QME can best be seen in the dramatic effectiveness of the U.S. military against Iraq during the Gulf War. Israel possesses and produces many of the high-technology weapons used by the United States in Desert Storm. Like Iraq, the Arab states surrounding Israel don't.³² Militarily, Israel is a modern army whose QME is enhanced further because, without exception, the Arab enemies it faces are at best eighth or ninth rate armies.³³ Israel's superior QME is not a new phenomena -- it was demonstrated convincingly in 1967, 1973 and 1982. As was the case for the United States in the build-up to Desert Storm, Israel's ultimate victory over its opponents is not really in question, the only question is at what cost in casualties?

Assuming some measure of rationality, Syria does not appear to have the capability or motivation to attack Israel once it withdraws from the Golan Heights.³⁴ In the context of Israeli military capability, the Syrian military constitutes not an existential threat, but merely a nuisance.

EARLY WARNING

Many Israelis, both opponents and supporters of peace with Syria, claim that Israel's intelligence facilities on the Golan are indispensable for insuring that Syria does not mount a large scale attack, similar to 1973, against Israel. Senior Israelis have used this argument in the United States as part of their demands that Israel be compensated' for its

possible loss of security guarantees resulting from an Israeli-Syrian accord. ³⁵ Were the Israelis to convince Washington to compensate them for making peace with Syria, this compensation would provide a major windfall in modernizing the IDF. However, these claims of an indispensable Golan are overstated and the reader should consider the possibility that a political agenda is behind these claims.

Since the early 1980s, the U.S. has provided Israel a minimum of \$3 billion each year in foreign military financing (FMF) and economic support fund (ESF) grants. ³⁶ This level of aid is based upon 1981 and 1983 memoranda of understanding on strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel. These memoranda called for U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation against a Soviet threat to the region. With the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the original assumptions underpinning U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation have disappeared. Logically, so has the rationale for the high aid levels. Coupled with this, recent milestones in the peace process have led some Congressional leaders to publicly question the need to continue the heavy subsidy of Israel when peace is breaking out all over. For several years, the Israelis have been anxious to find suitable regional threats, such as Iran, to replace the former Soviet threat. This would allow Israel to maintain their strategic value to the U.S. and keep the stream of military assistance flowing. To date, they have not succeeded, but by portraying a significant Syrian threat they may hope to validate their continued need for the aid to a sympathetic America. Israel has sufficient intelligence assets to offset the loss of its intelligence facilities on the Golan Heights and should suffer no major loss in warning capabilities by withdrawing from the Golan. Israel has sufficient ground and airborne intelligence assets available to replace critical data gathered on the Golan itself. ³⁷ These assets include Israel's newly developed Phalcon Airborne Early Warning aircraft. The Phalcon employs a phased array radar with Moving Target Indicator (MTI) mode capabilities which will allow it to simultaneously track 100 ground or air targets to a range of 250 miles³⁸ -- well beyond what would be needed for Golan surveillance. Israel also has MTI capable radars mounted on some of its reconnaissance fighter aircraft which can provide early warning out to 50 miles. In conjunction with these systems Israel also has a variety of: airborne-mounted, long-range electro-optical, ELINT (electronic intelligence), SIGINT (signals/communications intelligence), thermal signature, FLIR (forward-looking infrared radar), SLAR (side-looking airborne radar), remotely piloted vehicle and balloon aerostat intelligence systems. In addition, Israel now has its indigenous developmental satellite program, the Ofeq-3, reportedly with sufficient clarity to provide militarily significant intelligence. ³⁹ Taskable, satellite imagery capability with 1-Meter resolution is now available through commercial sources and could further offset the Israel's loss of its Golan intelligence facilities. Under full normalization with Syria, Israel would probably have liaison officers working with Syrian officers on the Golan⁴⁰ and military attaches in Syria who could provide early warning information. By withdrawing from the Golan, Israel may lose a large measure of the convenience that its facilities provide, but it will not lose the critical early warning information required.

If forced to withdraw from its intelligence facilities on the Golan, Israel is likely to ask the United States military to man and operate these (or other) early warning facilities in its place. This could present problems for the U.S.' impartiality⁴¹ and credibility as a facilitator of the peace process. Syria might consider any unbalanced U.S. reporting to Israel as providing Israel targeting data against it. As a peacekeeper, the United States

would be required to provide early warning data equally to both sides. Intelligence provided in this fashion is usually fairly generic⁴² and is not likely to be too palatable to Israel -- they would want much more.

Opponents of a U.S. military deployment to the Golan focus on this issue as a strong negative.⁴³ They argue that Israel could not rely on critical intelligence information from a foreign source -- even the United States. In terms of reciprocity between the two parties, Dore Gold speculates that the U.S. would have to construct intelligence facilities directed at Israel to provide Syria intelligence equal to that given to Israel. Such facilities would provide a quantum improvement in Syrian intelligence capabilities⁴⁴ to Israel's detriment. Gold also argues that reliability would be an issue. Intelligence collection would be divorced from intelligence analysis. Both parties would have to be satisfied with the intelligence provided and could not task collection based on individual priorities or concerns.⁴⁵ Both Gold and Gaffney make the point that Israel would be unlikely to depend on U.S. supplied intelligence because of differing priorities, interpretations, conclusions, perspectives or interests. To paraphrase Mr. Gaffney the intelligence would be ". . . filtered by foreign interests".⁴⁶ There is some merit in these arguments.

This raises the question of how important this issue is to Israel and why they raised it. Providing asymmetrical warning to Israel would compromise the impartiality and credibility of the U.S. as a peacekeeper. Why would Israel want to risk compromising the peace accord? Israel and the United States have robust military-to-military channels for sharing critical intelligence and military information. U.S. participation in the Golan peacekeeping force will not preclude continued military cooperation between Israel and the United States. These channels will remain open and will allow the U.S. to pass critical intelligence to Israel without compromising its impartiality or Israel's security.⁴⁷ Possible answers to this question again might be linked to the Israeli Government's need to provide popular reassurances.

While generic early warning and deterrence are feasible, are U.S. combat soldiers required to provide this data? Experience and precedent say no. In previous peacekeeping situations, the United States has provided early warning data through civilian organizations and technical means.⁴⁸ From 1976 to 1982, the Sinai Field Mission, established by the second disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt (1 September 1975) consisted of 200 U.S. civilians who provided electronic early warning surveillance in the critical mountain passes in the Sinai desert. Both Egypt and Israel were pleased with the performance of the Sinai Field Mission and agreed to extend its service by two years.⁴⁹ Since 1974, the United States has provided airborne surveillance photography for early warning to both the Israelis and Egyptians in the Sinai⁵⁰ and to Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights.

Combat units are not required to perform peacekeeping duties. U.S. military officers have served as unarmed military observers in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East since 1948. They have also served in Angola, the Western Sahara and Cambodia among others. A Civilian Observer Unit (COU), consisting of 25-30 State Department and retired U.S. military personnel,⁵¹ currently accomplishes a majority of the observer duties in the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai desert.⁵² Frank Gaffney makes the point, "There is no need for the United States to undertake an expensive, risky and open-ended commitment of troops to

carry out the relatively minor (and not inherently military) task of serving occasionally as a third-party referee on compliance issues."⁵³

DETERRENCE

A multilateral peacekeeping force on the Golan Heights, by its very presence, is likely to provide a large measure of political deterrence. Both Israel and Syria, at one time or another, have demonstrated a sensitivity to international opinion. An attack by either party on the other will antagonize, at least at a minimum, those countries providing peacekeeping personnel and could elicit diplomatic condemnation, a possible military response or international sanctions of one sort or another.

Peacekeeping forces in a Chapter VI type mission provide little, if any, military deterrence -- the political deterrence is more important. Deterrence is also maintained by several factors outside the context of a peacekeeping force. Israel's military might provides probably the strongest deterrent to Syria. Withdrawing from the Golan Heights will not diminish Israeli deterrence in Arab eyes. Another important deterrent is the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Even without the involvement of U.S. soldiers, America is likely to respond vigorously to any threat to Israel.

Many pundits have considered the deployment of a U.S. combat brigade or division to provide a "trip wire" or deterrent force.⁵⁴ This force would deter violations of the agreement and directly oppose any party engaging in aggression. Such a deployment would provide a credible military deterrent, but the downside outweighs its value. A "trip wire" could not force-posture against any one party without violating its impartiality. If it did posture only against Syria, Damascus would most likely oppose its deployment. A "trip wire" force would not demonstrate confidence in the strength of the peace or the sincerity of the parties -- it ". . . would send a message that an Israel-Syria peace was more like an armed truce enforced by outside powers rather than a reconciliation between erstwhile enemies; it would thereby reduce each side's incentive to work together to enhance mutual security and build confidence."⁵⁵ A "trip wire" force would greatly increase the costs and troop commitment of the U.S.⁵⁶ and would greatly increase its terrorist target value. It would run counter to Israel's credo of military self-reliance and would constrain Israeli military action Tel Aviv might consider necessary. Some analysts also worry that such a force would create conflicts and tensions in the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

THREAT TO U.S. SOLDIERS

Opponents of the Israeli withdrawal from the Golan (and certain members of the U.S. Congress) have postulated a series of threats to U.S. forces which according to them provide a rationale for not placing them there. The most common threat proposed is the possibility that U.S. forces deployed to the Golan would be subjected to terrorist attack. Mark Langfan⁵⁷ and Dore Gold⁵⁸ propose that upon regaining control of the Golan, Syria will flood the territory with Syrian population by resettling the 100,000-130,000 citizens that evacuated during the 1967 war in order to reestablish sovereignty. Mr. Langfan proposes that these civilians would be potentially hostile and might attack U.S. forces with "mines, remote controlled [road] side-bombs, snipers, grenade launchers or even

suicide "Beirut" type car bombs." Mr. Gold says these citizens would provide the Syrian government the option to harass an unwanted foreign presence by means of terrorist action. This latter point is inconsistent with the fact that U.S. forces will not deploy to the Golan without Syrian acquiescence (or a Syrian interest in having them there). Neither Mr. Langfan nor Mr. Gold specify to what purpose these attacks would be conducted, but Mr. Langfan states that the Syrian government would have the luxury of denying responsibility for such attacks by possibly attributing them to radical Muslim fundamentalist elements. There is no record of terror activity on the Golan. Such attacks would be inconsistent with Syrian national interests -- improving relations with the United States, shedding its reputation as a state sponsor of terror, seeking Western economic investment and having the U.S. forces on the Golan serving as a deterrent to Israeli aggression. History also shows that President al-Assad has effective techniques to counter such activity.

Other commentators, such as Frank Gaffney⁵⁹ cite the threat of terrorism originating in Lebanon from groups such as Hizb'allah (under nominal Syrian influence) and other renegade states such as Iran, Iraq or Libya. Again the purpose of such attacks is not specified. The threat of such attacks is overstated. With a couple of exceptions, the Shiite and Palestinian elements in Lebanon have not targeted U.S. military personnel; focusing instead on their goal of ending the Israeli occupation. The 1982 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut occurred in great part because the U.S. surrendered its impartiality when it engaged in combat operations against the Muslims on behalf of the Christians. Except for the case of LtCol Richard Higgins, USMC the U.S. military observer killed in Lebanon, which may have involved special circumstances, none of the 5-11 U.S. military officers a year who served as UN military observers in Lebanon from 1948-1993 had been threatened or harmed by Hizb'allah or any of the other Shiite Muslim groups.⁶⁰ Nor have the U.S. officers assigned to UNTSO and living in Damascus been threatened. U.S. forces on the Golan would not be observable for targeting or in range of most indirect fire weapons, such as Katyushas, fired from Lebanon. An attack on U.S. facilities or troops on the Golan would require terrorist penetration on foot (since it is unlikely Israel, Syria or Jordan would allow them across the border in vehicles), in generally open, unforested terrain over long distances. Assuming normal and reasonable security measures, the approach of terrorists on the Golan would be detected.⁶¹

Is there an indigenous terrorist threat that could appear on the Golan without al-Assad's blessing or Syrian support? Perhaps. Could Israeli settlers on the Golan try to sabotage an Israeli-Syrian peace by clandestinely attacking U.S. soldiers? Perhaps. Is the Golan absolutely devoid of a terrorist threat? Probably not. Could al-Assad's perspectives change? Perhaps. The threat of terrorism is a constant for American forces operating in foreign countries. American personnel have faced terrorism in countries as diverse as West Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Japan and Pakistan to name but a few. Terrorism is part of the territory in international engagement, but it should not preclude U.S. participation in activities which advance its national interests. Assurances from both Syria and Israel to cooperate in actions to prevent terrorist action against the deployed peacekeeping force should be included in the peacekeeping mission mandate. Another possibility raised is that U.S. troops would be caught in the Middle of a surprise Syrian attack or an Israeli military preemption against Syria. In the case of the former, previous arguments have established that such a scenario is fairly unlikely. The latter case

is a possibility considering that the loss of Israel's Golan early-warning facilities may greatly lower Israeli response thresholds. However, American casualties in such an event would not be automatic or guaranteed. U.S. military officers assigned to UNTSO served on the Sinai in 1973 and in Lebanon in 1982 without fatalities or major injury.

ALTERNATIVES

Unilateral U.S. Peacekeeping force. Establishment of a unilateral U.S. military force to serve as peacekeepers on the Golan should not be considered a credible alternative. It is not in American interests i.e. embracing multilateral engagement (PDD-25), burden-sharing, and conserving resources. It would be unnecessarily expensive for the accomplishment of mission goals and would probably not be accepted by either Israel or Syria.

Bolster UNDOF. UNDOF is widely held to be one of the United Nation's most successful peacekeeping mission. Capitalizing on this success, UNDOF could be bolstered with the addition of U.S. and other countries' soldiers to provide an enhanced force for guaranteeing an Israeli-Syrian accord. Such an approach offers several benefits: minimal start-up costs, extensive institutional mission experience, an established multilateral basis and the established confidence of Israel and Syria. From an American perspective, the UNDOF alternative provides burden-sharing, credibility and the prospect for minimizing its personnel contributions. The cost of UNDOF in 1994 was \$32.2 million.⁶²

Syria would probably prefer a UN force on the Golan because it believes, when needed, it could muster a large bloc of support within the UN from the Arab and non-aligned states and because it has two friends on the Security Council -- Russia and China. Israel would prefer that a peacekeeping force on the Golan not be under the auspices of the UN. Israel views the UN as indecisive, inefficient and potentially unfriendly to Israel. Israeli concerns arise from the precipitous withdrawal of the first United Nations Emergency Force from the Sinai in 1967 prompted only by the unilateral demands of Egypt's President Nasser. Israel also has a history of unpleasant disagreements with UNTSO and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). For the U.S., as described by PDD-25, the UN approach might be the best. If so, Israeli concerns can be addressed by explicit requirements written into the mission's mandate which would preclude unilateral termination or alteration of mission objectives and institute broader mission control responsibilities for both parties.

MFO II. This alternative would call for the formation of a new MFO-styled organization on the Golan Heights. Were the parties to declare success on the Sinai, it might be possible to migrate the existing MFO structure to the Golan. Such an approach would not offer the benefits that an enhanced UNDOF could provide. Mission start-up costs would probably be higher with the requirement to import mission equipment and support infrastructure. There would be no institutional knowledge on the mission area, its geography or effective operational measures. Command and control arrangements, acceptable to all mission participants, would need to be established. A new force would also be required to establish a *modus vivendi* with the parties to the accord and earn their confidence. The cost of the MFO in 1994 was \$53 million.⁶³ One proposal suggests that

such a force could be established under American civilian control, with civilian technicians, but without U.S. troops.⁶⁴

SUNSET CLAUSE

Both PDD-25 and the United Nations hold that peace operations should not be open-ended, burdensome commitments. This recognizes that there should come a point in time where the peacekeepers are no longer needed. This principle was not considered in the formation of the MFO in the Sinai. Many observers assess that the MFO's mission succeeded (years ago) and that it has outlived its usefulness. This judgement is supported by the very low operational tempo and requirements placed upon the MFO's observers. The MFO's protocols specify that mission termination requires unanimous agreement to do so. Both the United States and Egypt have indicated interest in concluding the mission; however, Israel, emphasizing the symbolic support the MFO provides for the peace process, wants the MFO to continue to serve.

U.S. concerns over the MFO are the extended commitment of U.S. soldiers. Egypt's concerns are probably the costs it pays and an issue of sovereignty -- the MFO's military forces are stationed and operate only on Egyptian soil. Syria is likely to have the same concerns over sovereignty and may demand that a "sunset clause" or programmed mission termination date be included in its accord with Israel. Senior military leaders in the Pentagon would probably welcome a "sunset clause" for the Golan Heights.⁶⁵

Any "sunset clause" should be tied to the successful accomplishment of specified peace milestones and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) which encourage and facilitate increasing the responsibilities of the two parties for the peace and diminish the need for third party supervision. These CBMs should include such measures as liaison officers, joint patrols, prenotification of military exercises and weapons tests, crisis management provisions such as a hotline and conflict resolution committees, and establishing transparency. Transparency is intended to help each country understand the defense policies and strategic intentions of the other and thereby lower tension. The primary vehicle to institute transparency would be through military-to-military ties which could include activities such as doctrinal exchanges, reciprocal base visits and personnel exchanges.

CONCLUSION

Considering the priority that an Arab-Israeli peace holds in American foreign policy, providing U.S. military personnel to perform peacekeeping duties on the Golan Heights is a small price to pay. A successful peacekeeping mission to guarantee an Israeli-Syrian peace accord is a doable proposition; however, the required peacekeeping responsibilities do not warrant committing a large U.S. force or combat units. As a "Chapter VI" type operation, a Golan peacekeeping mission should be reasonably straight-forward and simple. Since both parties will have agreed to establish peace, a nominal U.S. force of 50-200 military or civilian observers, within a larger multilateral organization of 1,200 to 2,000 personnel could effectively provide the necessary elements for mission success: compliance monitoring and early warning.

The U.S. should not succumb to hyperbole, paranoia, hysteria, agendas, "worst case" pressures or overemphasize its "special relations" with Israel in establishing the mission or size of the U.S. peacekeeping contingent. Israeli claims of the threat posed by Syria and the indispensability of the Golan must be critically analyzed. Syria does not have the capability or motivation to attack Israel. The Israelis are risk averse and prone to the status quo. Habitually, they analyze threats in a "worst case" mode which, as opposed to "most likely," is the most resource intensive and costly mode of planning. The U.S. must balance consideration of threat, risks, costs, resources and benefit in comprising its peacekeeping contingent to the Golan Heights.

U.S. policy has long held that an Israel confident in its security would be able to make the compromises necessary to create peace. The United States can and should continue to provide security assurances to Israel through existing bilateral military-to-military and strategic channels. It need not do so through its participation in a peacekeeping presence on the Golan. The U.S. should embrace the impartiality required and should not unnecessarily compromise its peacekeeping role with unbalanced bilateral considerations for one party over the other.

Endnotes

1. See among others Dore Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights and Israeli-Syrian Security Arrangements*, (Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, August 1994). Dr. Gold is the director of the U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy in the Middle East project at Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies; Frank Gaffney, Jr. *Et al*, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights: An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*, (Washington, D.C., The Center for Security Policy, 25 October 1994). The Center for Security Policy assembled six senior retired officers and five senior civilians who served in various senior governmental positions -- most as Assistant Secretary of Defense to address this issue; Mark Langfan, "U.S. Troops on Golan Quicksand?" *Security Affairs*, March 1994. Mr. Langfan is a real estate attorney in New York and is an avid activist in this issue; Gerald Steinberg, "Israeli Security in the Context of the Peace Process," *Security Dialogue*, Vol 25, No 1, March 1994. Mr. Steinberg is a Professor at Bar Ilan University in Israel; and Andrew Bacevich, Michael Eisenstadt and Carl Ford, *Supporting Peace: America's Role in an Israel-Syria Peace Agreement*, (Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1994). A well-reasoned and logical study.[BACK](#)

2. PDD-25 is a classified document. An extensive unclassified extract was provided to the press corps by the White House. This unclassified extract is available via the Internet from the Department of the Navy Public Affairs office (www.navy.mil/navpalib/policy/peaceops/elements.txt).[BACK](#)

3. While PDD-25 was oriented toward U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping operations, these factors are also meaningful when considering other, non-UN, peacekeeping operations.[BACK](#)

4. The U.S. Congress is likely to debate the issue. As the recent deployment of U.S. troops to Bosnia demonstrated, Congress has lately shown little interest in deploying U.S.

soldiers to peacekeeping missions around the world. Despite Congress' traditional generous support for the state of Israel, preliminary indications are that Congress may oppose a U.S. military deployment to the Golan Heights. Congress has been lobbied (with some apparent success) by Israeli Likud party supporters who oppose an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and who claim that the risks to U.S. soldiers would be high. [BACK](#)

5. Steven J. Rosen, *Military Geography and the Military Balance in the Arab-Israel Conflict*, (Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Post Press, 1977), p. 70. [BACK](#)

6. *The World Factbook, 1995*, (Washington, DC, Central Intelligence Agency, 1995), p. 408. [BACK](#)

7. This latter capability also provides a good measure of deterrence. [BACK](#)

8. Ze'ev Maoz, "Strategic Depth and Other Myths," *Ha'aretz*, 30 June 1995. [BACK](#)

9. An Israeli settlement evacuated by force by the Israeli government during Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai. The extensive press coverage of the forced evacuation resulted in significant government embarrassment. [BACK](#)

10. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Rabin Speaks at Opening of Winter Knesset Session", Cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, 4 October 1994, p. 44 FBIS-NES-94-192. [BACK](#)

11. Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, p. 30. [BACK](#)

12. United Nations, "Chapter VI, Pacific Settlement of Disputes," *Charter of the United Nations*, (San Francisco, The United Nations, 1945). [BACK](#)

13. International Peace Academy, *Peacekeepers Handbook*, (New York, Pergamon, 1984), p. 22. [BACK](#)

14. While not directly assigned to UNDOF, American military officers, assigned to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Damascus, Syria and Tiberias, Israel, have supported UNDOF's mission since its inception. UNTSO officers routinely conduct compliance inspections and liaison duties for UNDOF; however, U.S. and Soviet officers have been precluded from physically performing duties on the Golan itself by restrictions placed on the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. [BACK](#)

15. William J. Perry, Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, (Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), p. B1. [BACK](#)

16. See Muhammad Muslih, "Dateline Damascus: Asad is Ready," *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1994, pp. 145-63 and "The Golan: Israel, Syria, and Strategic Calculations," *Middle East Journal*, Vol 47, No 4, Autumn 1993, pp. 611-632.[BACK](#)

17. Ronald D. McLaurin, "Hidden Agendas Amidst Opposing Objectives -- The Newest Incarnation of the Middle East Peace Process," *Middle East Insight*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Sep/Oct 1991, p. 17.[BACK](#)

18. *Ibid*, p. 17. Mr. McLaurin points out that the true degree of Soviet commitment was uncertain, but "the Syrians long considered the Soviet backing a critical element of their overall strategic posture, even if it only introduced the requisite degree of uncertainty into Israeli planning."[BACK](#)

19. See Department Of State, *Background Notes: Syria*, (Washington, DC, State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, October 1995) and Patrick Clawson, *Unaffordable Ambitions: Syria's Military Build-Up and Economic Crisis*, (Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989).[BACK](#)

20. Smadar Peri, "IDF Intelligence Chief Interviewed," *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 25 Mar 1994. Cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, FBIS-NES-94-061.[BACK](#)

21. In the last year or so, Israel has made improvements in its relations with some of the smaller Gulf countries such as Oman and Qatar, but these are peripheral countries whose actions, in the context of Gulf Cooperation Council bickering, may have been more intended to annoy Saudi Arabia. The real key to broader Israeli regional integration lies with Saudi Arabia, the only Arab economic superpower, which is key to the economic focus of Israel's (or at least Prime Minister Peres') vision of a "new Middle East."[BACK](#)

22. This writer was told on several occasions by official Saudi delegates to the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) working group of the Multilateral Peace Process talks that Saudi Arabia has a special interest in insuring that Syria reached a satisfactory accord with Israel. Saudi interaction with the Israeli delegation in successive ACRS meetings appeared to be conditioned by the prevailing tone of Israeli-Syrian negotiations at the time. The Saudis are also very interested in the final status of Jerusalem and the Palestinians. Muhammad Muslih (*Dateline Damascus*: p. 159) makes this point as well when he says, "Saudi policy is almost completely in agreement with Syria's basic policy with respect to the peace talks with Israel."[BACK](#)

23. Having suffered resounding military defeats to Israel in 1948, 1967, 1973 and 1982.[BACK](#)

24. Former Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Ehud Barak said, "Today it is also clear that Syria without additional Arab allies -- and today it has no other Arab ally -- has a far smaller military option than in 1973. If there has been any change in the Syrian military option, one must realize that it has weakened due to the developments of the past few years. It is not getting any stronger." Tzvi Timor, "IDF

Chief of Staff Baraq on Talks With Syria," *Al Hamishmar*, 14 September 1994, pp. 7-9. Cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, 14 Sept 1994, FBIS-NES-94-182.[BACK](#)

25. Amassing a debt estimated by some sources as high as \$16 billion to the former Soviet Union.[BACK](#)

26. See McLaurin, "Hidden Agendas," p. 17.[BACK](#)

27. Both Syrian and Israeli numbers are ground forces only.[BACK](#)

28. Shlomo Gazit and Zeev Eytan, *The Middle East Military Balance 1993-1994* (Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Post, 1994) p. 439 state that Syria can mobilize another 750,000 reservists not organized in units and 400,000 members of the Worker's militia. This writer is comfortable ignoring these numbers because these personnel would not be suitable for offensive operations. Syria does not have the major weapons systems to arm these personnel and they lack the necessary training and leadership to comprise effective combat units. Their most effective use would likely be home defense. In most Arab armies, maintenance of low-capability reserves such as these reduces overall military readiness because it diverts resources which would be better spent improving the combat capabilities of the active force.[BACK](#)

29. The value of such a comparison is only to demonstrate broad trends. The data will support little else. The data doesn't factor the different prices each country pays for equipment from different suppliers. It doesn't factor equipment received, but not paid for such as the \$700 million in drawdown Israel received from the United States between 1992-95 or equipment Israel received from the U.S. without cost as excess defense articles. It doesn't necessarily factor the cost of equipment produced indigenously by defense industries such as Israel's when infrastructure costs are accounted for under other national categories. It doesn't factor the quality of the technology transferred. It doesn't factor time differences in delivery and payment, etc. [BACK](#)

30. See Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1987-1994*, CRS Report for Congress 95-862 F, (Washington, DC, Congressional Research Service, August 4, 1995), pp. 50-52. Mr. Grimmett presents data on arms transfer agreements during the periods 1987-1990 and 1991-1994. In the period 1987-1990 Syria implemented agreements for \$5.3 billion to Israel's \$2.3 billion. During the period 1991-1994, Syrian agreements totaled only \$900 million compared to Israel's \$4.3 billion. Totals for the two periods were Syria \$6.5 billion and Israel \$6.6 billion. The significant Syrian decline in the 1991 to 1994 period should have a significant negative impact on future Syrian military readiness. [BACK](#)

31. According to Steven Metz and James Kievit, *The Revolution in Military Affairs and Conflict Short of War*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College), p. 5, the Revolution in Military Affairs is, ". . . centered around the fusion of sophisticated remote sensing systems with extremely lethal, usually stand-off, precision

strike weapons systems and automation-assisted command, control and communications (C³) . . . [which] allow smaller militaries to attain rapid, decisive results through synchronized, near-simultaneous operations throughout the breadth and depth of a theater of war." [BACK](#)

32. For strategic reasons, the United States has transferred high-technology weapons such as M-1 tanks, AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, Patriot air defense missiles, F-15 and F-16 fighter aircraft to states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. However the systems usually don't have the same capabilities as those provided to Israel and the Arab states have significant problems in absorbing the technologies involved and employing them in a fashion that in any way approaches their capabilities. [BACK](#)

33. With perhaps only one exception -- Jordan -- the Arab armies facing Israel emphasize mass over quality, have highly centralized inflexible command structures, poor organization for combat, depend on conscripted, poorly educated, poorly paid soldiers, lack technical sophistication, rely on outdated choreographed Soviet military doctrine, eschew effective training, and lack an emphasis on sustainability. Acquisition generally focuses on "big-ticket" high-technology equipment items purchased without the required training and sustainment packages. These countries seem to believe that the mere possession of these high-tech, sophisticated weapon systems and not any operational proficiency with them provides deterrence. [BACK](#)

34. Bacevich, Eisenstadt and Ford (*Supporting Peace*., p. 11) state that, "Damascus currently lacks the means to retake the Golan by force." and cite Michael Eisenstadt, *Arming for Peace? Syria's Elusive Quest for Strategic Parity*, (Washington, DC, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992). [BACK](#)

35. In various political and military venues, Israel has asked the U.S. to compensate Israel for making peace with Syria. In the various compensation proposals, Israel has asked for acquisition of JSTARS aircraft, downlink terminals for U.S. satellite imagery, a variety of other weapons systems and funds to cover redeployment costs. Reported estimates of Israel's compensation requests run from \$2.5 billion to \$12 billion. See for example Aluf Ben, "Officials Differ on Timing of Request for U.S. Aid," *Ha'aretz*, 20 May 1994, cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, FBIS-NES-94-102; Avino'am Bar-Yosef, "Baraq Demands Early Warning Alternatives From U.S.," *Ma'ariv*, 19 August 1994, p. 2. cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, FBIS-NES-94-161; Alon Pinkas, "Shahaq To Discuss Golan Compensation Package' in U.S." *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 Jun 1995, pp. 1,2 cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, FBIS-NES-94-112; and OpEd, "The Price of Middle East Peace," *Washington Post*, January 17, 1996, p. 16. [BACK](#)

36. In fiscal year 1995, Israel's share of the total U.S. security assistance budget totaled approximately 55 percent. Assistance to Egypt, linked to Israel through Camp David, comprised 36 percent. This left only 9 percent for the rest of the world. [BACK](#)

37. Major General Uri Sagi, then the Director of Military Intelligence, Israel Defense Forces supported this assessment during a 14 September 1994 interview with the Israeli newspaper *Yedi'ot Aharonot* when he said, "*Nobody better than me realizes the enormous importance of the Golan Heights from the intelligence point of view, particularly when we do not yet have a political arrangement. On the other hand, I also realize that if and when the political level makes its decision the Army in general and the Intelligence Branch in particular will find ways to supply early warning . . . If and when the political level decides that the political arrangement calls for a redeployment I believe we will find the answers.*" Smadar Peri, "Intelligence Head on Arab Leaders' Health, Syria," *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 14 Sept 1994, pp. 1,2,3. Cited from FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, 14 Sept 1994, FBIS-NES-94-182.[BACK](#)

38. Bernard Blake, Ed. *Jane's Radar and Electronic Warfare Systems*, (Alexandria, VA, Jane's Information Group Inc., 1995) pp. 269-270. Note: Israel's Phalcon is apparently experiencing technical difficulties and is not yet fully operational. Israel sold a Phalcon to Chile who has had repeated system problems and complained to Israel of system shortcomings. With Israel's national technical prowess, these problems should be quickly overcome.[BACK](#)

39. Christian Larder, "Israel Launches Ofeq-3 Satellite," *Air & Cosmos/Aviation International*, 14 April 1995, p. 36. Cited in FBIS, JPRS Reports, 14 Apr 1995, JPRS-EST-95-014.[BACK](#)

40. See Ben Kaspit, "Uzi Dayan's Dilemma: How to Return the Golan Heights While Preserving Israel's Deterrent Power," *Ma'ariv*, 19 Jan 1996, p. 14. Cited in FBIS, *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, 23 Jan 1996, FBIS-NES-96-015.[BACK](#)

41. The requirement for the impartiality of peacekeeping forces is universally accepted. There are a plethora of sources which uphold the criticality of impartiality. The United Nations states, "It is a key principle that the operation . . . must not in any way favour one party against another. This requirement of impartiality is fundamental, not only on the grounds of principle but also to ensure the operation is effective. A United Nations operation cannot take sides without becoming a part of the conflict which it has been set up to control or resolve." United Nations, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, (New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1990), p. 6.[BACK](#)

42. In this context, generic is used to refer to early warning intelligence provided by the peacekeeping authority equally to the two parties on a "take it or leave it" basis. Such an arrangement would not allow either party to task collection of special requirements or intelligence priorities without the acquiescence of the other party.[BACK](#)

43. See Dore Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights* and Frank Gaffney, *An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*.[BACK](#)

44. Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, p. 22. Gaffney, *An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*, p. 18, also addresses this point.[BACK](#)

45. Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, p. 22.[BACK](#)

46. Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, p. 23 and Gaffney, *An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*, pp. 8, 18-19.[BACK](#)

47. While the U.S. will provide critical intelligence data in these channels it would probably be careful to exclude data which would increase the possibilities of a preemptive Israeli strike against Syria.[BACK](#)

48. Perhaps using these precedents, Bacevich, Eisenstadt and Ford, (*Supporting Peace*:, pp. 19, 35, 40, 47) call for 200-300 U.S. *civilian or military* technicians to perform the early warning duties for a Golan peacekeeping force.[BACK](#)

49. See Mala Tabory, *The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai: Organization, Structure, and Function*, (Boulder, Westview Press, 1986), p. 6., and Dore Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, pp. 20-21.[BACK](#)

50. See Tabory, *The Multinational Force*, p. 7; John Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers: An Assessment of Peacekeeping Operations at the Arab-Israel Interface*, (London, Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 164; and Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, p. 21.[BACK](#)

51. See Tabory, *The Multinational Force*, p. 72; Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers*:, pp. 183-4 and Robert B. Houghton and Frank G. Trinkka, *Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East*, (Washington, Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, 1984), pp. 50-51.[BACK](#)

52. The MFO area of operations is broken into four zones A-D. The MFO's military forces operate only in zone C inside the Egyptian border. Observation duties in the other three zones are handled exclusively by the COU. The COU operates in zone C as well.[BACK](#)

53. Gaffney, *An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*, p. 9. It should be noted that Mr. Gaffney, and the group of retired General Officers and former senior leaders he collaborated with on his work, oppose a U.S. military deployment on the Golan.[BACK](#)

54. See Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, pp. 30-34; Gaffney, *An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*, pp. 10-11; and Bacevich, Eisenstadt and Ford, *Supporting Peace*:, p. 36.[BACK](#)

55. Bacevich, Eisenstadt and Ford, *Supporting Peace*:, p. 36.[BACK](#)

56. In terms of personnel, the commitment of a unit to a long-term peacekeeping mission requires a force three times the size of the committed unit to sustain. (1) The unit

deployed, (2) the next unit scheduled to deploy is withdrawn from normal operations to provide manning, equipment and specialized training, and (3) the unit that has returned from serving in the mission must be blocked to re-train its soldiers in their primary combat specialties. This re-training is critical to return the unit to combat proficiency since peacekeeping duties will not sustain required combat skills.[BACK](#)

57. Mark Langfan, "Quicksand?" *Security Affairs*, March 1994.[BACK](#)

58. Gold, *U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights*, p. 43.[BACK](#)

59. Gaffney, *An Assessment of Benefits and Costs*, p. 15.[BACK](#)

60. This fact is not coincidental. In 1985, the Lebanese Shiite Amal military chief the late Daoud Daoud offered to protect the American observers assigned in southern Lebanon when their senior officer received an anonymous death threat and the Americans were temporarily withdrawn from duty in southern Lebanon. Daoud believed that the presence of the Americans inhibited the Israelis and supported Shiite goals. One U.S. Navy Commander assigned in southern Lebanon noted that a colorful emblem had been painted onto a building which had become a meeting hall. This meeting hall was fairly close to his living quarters. It was a couple of weeks later when he discovered that the colorful emblem was the crest of Hizb'allah. Despite their proximity and the American flag patch he wore on his uniform daily, the Commander was never bothered or threatened by Hizb'allah.[BACK](#)

61. See Michael Eisenstadt, "U.S. Troops on the Golan?", *Middle East Insight*, Vol. XI, Number 2, January-February 1995, pp. 51.[BACK](#)

62. National Defense University, *1995 Strategic Assessment*, (Washington, DC, National Defense University, 1995), pp. 166-167.[BACK](#)

63. *Ibid.*[BACK](#)

64. Bacevich, Eisenstadt and Ford, *Supporting Peace*, p. 35. The authors' intent in this proposal appears to be related to minimizing the constraint that U.S. soldiers might place on Israel's freedom of action.[BACK](#)

65. It should be noted that a termination of U.S. participation would not necessarily lead to mission discontinuance.[BACK](#)